

PUBLIC INPUT

Overview

The complexity of park planning requires a thoughtful, rational, and participative process. One of the key objectives in the master planning process was to have an inclusive public engagement process in order to gain a clear understanding of public opinion and desires regarding facility development, park acquisition and recreation programming. Public input also provided staff with the basis on which to formulate recommendations, as well as identify improvement areas and highlight current strengths.

Like any undertaking, creating a dialogue begins with a sound strategy. Columbia Parks and Recreation's (CPRD) strategy for information sharing and transparency was to meet with a record number of citizens and diverse park user groups. Department staff communicated with a total of 58 park user groups (over 325 citizens) at 45 separate meetings throughout an eleven-month time period. Input was obtained in a variety of forums: community-wide meetings, small focus group meetings and boards and commission meetings. The Department facilitated two community-wide public input meetings designed to ascertain priority needs, as well as provide feedback on capital improvement projects and revisions to existing planning documents. The initial master plan meeting was held on October 18, 2011 and served as both a venue for comments regarding the park master planning process and input related to priority needs for parks and recreation facilities and services. The evening meeting was divided into categories to provide park user groups with an opportunity to gather in unison to ensure relevant information was not overlooked. Sessions were divided by the following groups:

1. Sports and Athletics
2. Environment and Natural Resources
3. General Park Users and Interested Parties

The second community-wide public input meeting was held March 15, 2012. The goal of this meeting was to solicit comments on the following planning documents: *2012 Draft Trails Plan*, *2012 Draft Neighborhood Park Plan* and lists of identified capital improvement projects for both existing facilities and facilities with an undetermined location.

Both public meetings were held at the ARC. The Department advertised meetings by utilizing the following venues: media press release, paid advertising, social media, City website posting, radio interviews, and email listservs. Attendees were provided with an opportunity to communicate with onsite staff or via public comment form.

In addition to public meetings, CPRD conducted both a citywide citizen survey, as well as a park user survey in order to help

45 public input meetings were held



Public Input Meeting at the ARC

753 completed household surveys

provide insight into the community’s desire for public facilities and recreation programming. The private firm ETC Institute/Leisure Vision was contracted to conduct a random citizen survey in March and April 2010 and obtained 753 completed household surveys. The purpose of the survey was threefold: to establish priorities for the improvement of facilities and programs, to determine park user satisfaction with the Department, and to determine funding support for parks and recreation services. Based on input received from the random survey, staff conducted a similar online park user survey in November and December 2011. The Department received a total of 786 completed park user surveys. The survey instrument and charts/graphs from both surveys can be found in Appendix B. The complete 681 page Findings Report for the citywide citizen survey by ETC Institute/Leisure Vision and the complete park user survey can be found on the Parks and Recreation website at www.GoColumbiaMo.com.

786 completed park user surveys

Other comments received via email, phone calls and informal discussions completed the public input process and provided a full inventory of public opinion. The following narrative provides both a summary of the various phases of the input process and conclusions drawn therefrom.

The Parks and Recreation Department conducted the following public and focus group meetings from October 2011 through August 2012.

Public Meetings

- 10/18/11 Public Meeting
- 03/15/12 Public Meeting

Focus Group Meetings

- 09/15/11 Maplewood Barn Community Theater
- 09/20/11 Columbia Center for Urban Agriculture and Columbia Garden Coalition
- 09/26/11 Blue Thunder Track Club and Douglass Athletic Association/Baseball
- 09/26/11 Columbia's Farmers Market
- 10/06/11 Diamond Council
- 10/07/11 Archery Enthusiasts
- 10/11/11 Skateboard Park Enthusiasts
- 10/11/11 Pickleball Enthusiasts
- 10/11/11 Boone County Historical Society
- 10/13/11 City of Columbia Disabilities Commission
- 10/14/11 Missouri Department of Conservation – Hunting
- 10/14/11 Sustainable Farms and Community
- 10/17/11 Mid-Missouri LaCrosse League
- 10/19/11 Bicycle and Pedestrian Commission
- 10/20/11 Missouri Department of Conservation - Fishing



Public Input Meeting at the ARC

- 10/20/11 Columbia Parks and Recreation Commission
- 10/24/11 United Cerebral Palsy Heartland; ADA Playground Design
- 10/24/11 Columbia Youth Basketball Association
- 10/25/11 Columbia Bike Club
- 10/26/11 Columbia Convention and Visitor Bureau
- 10/27/11 Columbia Disc Golf Club
- 11/01/11 City of Columbia Historic Preservation Commission
- 11/04/11 Finger Lakes State Park
- 11/07/11 Rock Bridge State Park
- 11/08/11 Boone County Park Commission
- 11/09/11 GetAbout Columbia: Non-Motorized Transportation Pilot Project Advisory Committee
- 11/10/11 Columbia Swim Club
- 11/14/11 Columbia Soccer Club
- 11/14/11 Carrera Soccer Club
- 11/15/11 Columbia Chamber of Commerce
- 11/15/11 Boone County Baseball
- 11/15/11 Columbia Council PTA
- 11/16/11 CoMo Bike Polo
- 11/30/11 PedNet Coalition
- 12/02/11 Douglass Park Neighborhood Association and Douglass High School
- 12/06/11 Greenbelt Land Trust of Mid-Missouri
- 12/07/11 Mizzou Club Sports
- 12/09/11 Columbia Youth Football League
- 01/18/12 Douglass Park Forum
- 04/18/12 Douglass Park Forum (follow up to January meeting)
- 04/19/12 Columbia Parks and Recreation Commission
- 05/04/12 Columbia Track Club
- 08/23/12 Douglass Park Planning Committee



Douglass Park Planning Meeting

Parks and Recreation planning and administration staff also communicated with the following groups via email, phone calls or informal discussions:

- Boone Ice Group
- Central Latino de Salud
- Father Tolton High School
- Columbia Sports Group
- Columbia Audubon Society
- Columbia College
- United States Tennis Association/Missouri Valley
- Rockers Girls Softball Club
- Special Olympics - Bocce Ball

*Citizen Comment from
the Citywide Survey:*

“We love this city because of the value they place on trails, parks, green space and nature.”

Regularly Scheduled Meetings

Columbia Public School District

The Columbia Parks and Recreation Department recognizes that quality public schools are essential to the City of Columbia. The Columbia Public School District and the Parks and Recreation Department share the goals that children be safe, healthy, and well-prepared for education and becoming productive community members. Together, the school district and the Department partners to provide facilities including parks, trails, playgrounds, fitness tracks and indoor gym space.

Administrators from both the school district and the Department regularly meet to discuss future facility and program partnerships in order to maximize the benefits provided to all of Columbia's citizens.

Higher Education

The Department works closely with local colleges and universities regarding the joint use of facilities. Columbia College and Stephens College uses Columbia Parks & Recreation Department's fields as their home for their softball programs. The University of Missouri is working with the Department on use of Cosmo-Bethel Tennis Courts as a practice site for hosting Southeastern Conference tournaments. In addition, MU Recreation uses numerous fields and facilities for their various club teams. In return, the Department utilizes facilities at the local colleges for leagues, tournaments and special events such as the Tiger Night of Fun Halloween event at the Hearnes Center. Communication between the local colleges and universities is ongoing with meetings planned as needed.



Public Input Meeting at the ARC

Citizen Comment from the Park User Survey:

“Love the hiking and biking trails. Because of them I’m outdoors more often, and the improvements for bikes (trails/roads) has dramatically increased my bike riding.”

PUBLIC INPUT

Focus Group Meetings

An important consideration for any park master plan is complete understanding of the needs of groups and organizations representing thousands of youth and adult park patrons. Columbia Parks and Recreation Department (CPRD) staff communicated with a total of 58 park user groups at 45 separate meetings to solicit input on current and future park needs. Many of the organization's requests included items that could be funded through the City's operating budget or were already included and funded in the Department's Capital Improvement Program. Listed below is a summary of unfunded items requested during the focus group meetings.



Focus Group Meeting at PMC

I. Athletic Organizations

A. Boone County Baseball

1. Add batting cages at Albert-Oakland.
2. Need to provide one 60-90/360 ft. field for 13 -14 age bracket at Atkins Park instead of the planned 275 ft. and 300 ft. fields. Suggested that CPRD provide four fields with lights rather than five fields if funding is limited.
3. Need 8 full-size practice baseball fields at Philips Park.

B. Blue Thunder Track Club

1. Need a permanent home track and a storage facility to house track and field supplies.

C. Carrera Soccer

1. Need more practice fields.
2. Need a soccer complex with 10 – 12 artificial turf fields for league games and to host local and regional tournaments. This would allow Cosmo fields to be used as practice fields.
3. Need a full-field, indoor soccer facility with amenities to host events as well as sport tournaments.

D. Columbia Soccer Club

1. Need more full-sized game fields to allow for field recuperation as well as added opportunities to host state cup tournaments. Prefer development of 10 – 12 full-sized game fields at southeast regional park and practice fields at Cosmo.
2. Field improvements needed on Cosmo soccer fields #7, #8, #12, #13, #14, #15 and #16.
3. Need lights on select fields to allow more practice and game time for adult soccer.
4. Renovate existing Cosmo restrooms.
5. Need a full-field, indoor soccer facility with amenities to host events as well as tournaments.

E. Columbia Swim Club

1. Need assurance of an indoor aquatic facility that would remain available for year-round practice sessions. Preferred option would be construction of a new indoor natatorium, but continued maintenance and improvements to Hickman Pool will suffice for the short-term.
2. Need additional storage space or facility at Hickman Pool.

F. Columbia Youth Basketball Association

1. Need 4 – 6 indoor courts with dedicated time for youth basketball league. Construction of a wood floor, “no-frills” facility would suffice.
2. Collaborate with Columbia Public Schools in joint construction of sport facilities.

G. Columbia Youth Football League

1. Need additional game fields due to growth in program and overuse of existing fields.
2. Need spectator bleachers for Cosmo fields #5 and #6.
3. Need additional storage for equipment.
4. Consider offering Cosmo fields #13, #14 and #15 as multi-purpose fields instead of soccer use only.

H. Diamond Council

1. Need additional ag-lime fields with 225 ft. fences and irrigation on both the infield and outfield.
2. Need 2 more fields at 275 ft. fence distance at American Legion if space allows.
3. Convert 2 Antimi fields to 210 foot fences with netting to restrict foul balls from leaving field.
4. Update and enlarge dugouts at existing fields (Antimi).
5. Need more shade areas for spectators – including near concessions stands and bleachers - at all complexes.
6. Develop playground areas at all sport complexes for player siblings.
7. Renovate restrooms at all sport complexes.
8. Need lights on the east field at American Legion.
9. Need to build storage shed closer to Antimi.
10. Need lights for t-ball fields at Antimi.
11. Need lights between Antimi fields and parking lots.
12. Need additional batting cages at Antimi.
13. Need additional parking near Antimi Black & Gold fields.
14. Repairs needed to Antimi women’s restroom roof to allow for more dry storage. Build retaining walls at Gold Field and Green Field so players can more safely access dugouts.
15. Add water hookups to Antimi umpire room.
16. Add lightning warning lights and horns for Antimi and Rainbow – DC to pay for hardware.
17. Consider installing additional fencing at Antimi for a more controlled crowd entrance for tournament play.
18. Conduct pre and post meeting season meeting with CPRD and DC board.

19. Add more parking around Antimi complex.
20. Need portable fences – DC to purchase and CPRD to install as needed.
21. Requested that CPRD be a co-sponsor of a fall youth league.

I. Douglass Athletic Association/Douglass Baseball

1. Need storage area for game and other special events equipment at Douglass Park.
2. Add batting cages at Douglass Park.
3. Need increased safety measures (lights, fence, cameras, etc.) and substantial public relations campaign for families to support Douglass Park programs.

J. Mid-Missouri Lacrosse League

1. Need 2 -3 additional turf fields for game play and tournaments.
2. Add lights to Cosmo fields #4 & #5 for game play and tournaments.
3. Construct skills wall at existing Cosmo field practice facility.
4. Need an indoor facility for winter practice sessions and game play.
5. Requested that CPRD assist with referee training.

K. Rockers Girls Softball

1. Convert all Antimi fields to ag-lime.
2. Extend Antimi T-ball fields to 150 ft.
3. Update and enlarge dugouts at existing fields.
4. Convert Antimi fields to 210 foot fences with foul ball netting.

L. USTA Tennis

1. Continue promoting beginner tennis programs in Columbia, especially with current “10 and Under Tennis” promotion.
2. Keep up annual maintenance program and plan for re-surfacing tennis courts as suggested by USTA guidelines.

II. Sport Enthusiasts Groups

A. Archery

1. Develop a centrally located, special use park with approximately 80 – 100 acres for archery practice to serve as a location for Rinehart 100 archery target shoot. Land should be heavily forested and include adequate event parking and basic amenities.
2. Renovate American Legion archery range including lengthening and widening stalls, adding shelter to stalls, adding an accessible stall and improving existing hanging system.
3. Develop satellite archery facilities around the community.

B. Special Olympic Bocce Ball

1. Construct 6 clay bocce courts, 12 x 60 ft. with bumpers and backboards at a location with adequate parking for Special Olympic tournaments. Preferable locations are Cosmo Park, Rock Quarry or SE corner of Stephens Lake Park.

C. Columbia Bike Club

1. Provide parkland to accommodate a .5 - .75 mile cyclocross race course with varied terrain.
2. Provide dedicated area for weekly cyclocross practice.
3. Identify or acquire parkland for development of mountain bike trails – including parkland adjacent to Hinkson Creek Trail and the proposed Grindstone Trail.
4. Develop “bike skills” course adjacent to the MKT Trail to include features such as jumps, dips, berms, etc.
5. Provide wayfinding signs on trails system – including Rhett’s Run.
6. Create marketing campaign for local mountain bike trails – including online and collateral materials.

D. CoMo Bike Polo

1. Install lights at existing roller hockey rink.
2. Construct of 2 – 4 regulation sized, lighted bike polo courts with 4 ft. boards. Court space would allow the club to host regional tournaments.
3. Add water fountain to existing skate facility.

E. Ice Skating

1. Develop an indoor, single sheet (with option to expand) ice arena to support youth hockey league and recreational and competitive ice skating.

F. Pickleball

1. Construct a multi-purpose facility with 3 – 5 courts for year -round play.
2. Identify and renovate vacant warehouse to create pickleball facility.
3. Construct additional lighted outdoor facilities. Suggested locations include Rock Quarry Park, Albert-Oakland Park (convert sand volleyball courts), southeast regional park or vacant parking lots.
4. Construct a dedicated facility with 6 – 8 pickleball courts to accommodate state, regional and national competitions.
5. Resurface/re-stripe Albert-Oakland tennis courts.
6. Pickleball enthusiasts are interested in conducting clinics and implementing league play at the Armory or ARC in order to introduce residents to the sport.

G. Skateboarding

1. Install lights to expand hours of operation and alleviate crowding during daylight hours at Columbia Skate Park.
2. Expand Columbia Skate Park to include bowl design or simple small obstacles for intermediate skateboarders.
3. Construct satellite skate features (benches, ramps, rails) at various community locations to allow for better access to skate facilities.
4. Provide bleachers at Columbia Skate Park.
5. Provide shaded area for skaters and spectators.

H. Columbia Disc Golf Club

1. Develop long championship course with varied terrain that could accommodate 4 – 7 day tournaments with up to 500 players.
2. Update/replace tee signs on all three courses.
3. Provide scorecards with updated maps.
4. Consider mowing less area to accommodate “out of bounds” play.
5. Continue to add trees to existing courses for versatility of playing area.
6. Continue trimming and mulching tees and basket areas.
7. Continue to replace baskets with “old style” metal baskets as needed.
8. Construct bridges on Albert-Oakland back #10 and #11 and front #13.
9. Replace signs at Albert-Oakland to reflect new map.
10. Add more tee placements at Indian Hills for course versatility.
11. Provide additional benches to Indian Hills course.
12. Partner with club to introduce disc golf to local youth via clinics, summer camps or tournament play.

I. Columbia Track Club

1. Desire a permanent, regulation cross-country course with varied terrain at Cosmo Park.
2. Provide one year-round water fountain along trail at Cosmo Park.
3. Need adequate provision of year-round water fountains along all new trail development.

III. **Disabilities Commission and Seniors**

A. City of Columbia Disabilities Commission

1. Playground ADA issues should be a priority for P&R - including repairs and updates.
2. Park signage needs to be designed with ADA visibility standards (e.g. high contrast, low glare, non-serif font, large print, height level, etc.). Consider audible signage for sight-impaired individuals.
3. Create wheelchair accessible fishing dock at Philips Lake (similar to Stephens Lake with fence barrier).
4. Provide pull lift at ARC hot tub.
5. Expand community fishing programs.
6. Repair crumbling sidewalks at Cosmo-Bethel
7. Add accessible parking spaces at Cosmo-Bethel.
8. Adapt emergency response policies and protocol to allow for aging population at recreation and sport facilities.
9. Expand volunteer positions in the areas of research and project management to meet the desires of skilled baby boomers.

B. United Cerebral Palsy Heartland; Playground Design

1. Replace all wood mulch and pea gravel playground surfaces with poured pads.
2. Incorporate lower fall zone (2’ – 4’) into playground design to eliminate need for 6 ft. buffer. Design with lower ramps and platforms for better accessibility.
3. Develop paved areas or concrete existing trails for tricycle use – good for motor skills development.

4. Provide shade canopies over playground areas - many medications make children more sun sensitive.
5. Consider disabled parents when designing playground structures for able-bodied children – disabled parents need access to and under playground equipment.

IV. Economic Development and Tourism

A. City of Columbia Convention and Visitors Bureau

1. Need indoor and outdoor sport facilities for hosting regional and state tournaments.
2. Need additional parking at Stephens Lake to better accommodate events.
3. Need variety of home/grounds upgrades to Nifong Park to accommodate senior programming.
4. Continue to be open to variances in the special event permitting process.
5. Consider historical reenactment programming at Nifong to attract regional tourism.
6. Collaborate on printing of a new trails map for increased tourism potential – including mountain biking/hiking and bicycling trails.
7. Collaborate on creation and implementation of tourist industry, hospitality training regarding local park amenities and trail routes.
8. Need “gateway signage” to market Columbia to I-70 and Hwy 63 traffic.
9. Incorporate QR codes and smart device applications for park and trail signage and marketing.

B. Columbia Chamber of Commerce

1. Community needs to collaborate on campaign for funding/constructing a major sports complex to host regional and national soccer tournaments. A feasibility study is needed to assess available weekends, hotel base, existing facilities, etc.
2. Add parking lots to neighborhood parks with open playfields.
3. Need small skate park facilities at various locations around the community to reduce skating on private property and shared public spaces.

C. Columbia Sports Group

1. Need to have a collaborative effort with the City, Columbia Public Schools, all three colleges and local sport organizations to bring in more events, continue to support and grow existing events and to identify and prioritize Columbia’s sport facility needs.

V. Historical and Entertainment/Performing Arts

A. Boone County Historical Society

1. Install lights throughout Nifong Park.
2. Install an improved security system.
3. Improve and construct hard surface walkways to and around Maplewood House and connector walkways throughout Nifong Park.
4. Provide interpretive signs around perimeter of Nifong Park and pedways/trails connecting Nifong to Philips Park.
5. Replace shelter with larger structure to accommodate groups of 200 or more.

6. Provide additional event and porous surface overflow parking at Nifong Park.
7. Consider improvements at Nifong Park to address potential increase in visitor usage due to future construction of student housing and development of athletic facilities at Philips Park.
8. Repurpose animal barn as agricultural museum.
9. Renovate Maplewood House.
10. Raise tree canopy throughout the park.

B. City of Columbia Historic Preservation Commission

1. Interested in Heibel-March building as a location for sales/storage of architectural salvage items.
2. Redesign Village Square Park.
3. Consider Juliet Boiling House (circa 1904)/Moore's Depot as park acquisition.
4. Create MKT interpretive signage regarding history of railway.
5. Create CCRA interpretive signage or online information regarding aviation history – include PMC light beacon. Consider renaming Cosmo Park roadways with names associated with aviation themes.
6. Create an indoor interpretive center in one of the PMC hangars incorporating history of Candlelight Lodge, Stephen Women's pilot program, light beacon, plane displays, etc.
7. Consider retaining the original "Airport" lettering that is bleeding through the east side of the Park Management Center hangar.

C. Maplewood Barn Community Theater

1. Construct roof for outdoor stage to accommodate lights and for weather protection.
2. Add parking to Nifong Park to accommodate high attendance performances and facility rentals.
3. Add lights to park grounds surrounding Maplewood Barn.
4. Secure business identification and directional signs for Hwy 63 and south entrance from Discovery Ridge Parkway.
5. Install security system for Maplewood Barn.
6. Raise tree canopy in Nifong Park.
7. Add single table shelters and better access to Nifong Park to accommodate proposed construction of neighborhood student housing.

VI. Public Agencies

A. Boone County Parks Commission

1. Boone County Parks Commission supports proposed parks, trails and facilities that serve all of Boone County and is open to future collaborative efforts as appropriate.

B. Columbia Park and Recreation Commission

1. Supports inclusion of unfunded amenities from 2002 Facility Needs Update into the 2013 plan.
2. Consider adding ADA playground features to each neighborhood park.

C. Finger Lakes State Park

1. Collaborate with marketing of area mountain biking trails.

D. Missouri Department of Conservation (MDC)

1. Consider partnering on Gans Creek Recreation Area (GCRA) stream restoration.
2. Construct connector trail from MDC offices on Gans Road to Rock Bridge State Park via GCRA.
3. Collaborate with MDC on GCRA pond management.
4. Continue joint partnership on Community Assistance Program and hunter registration classes.
5. Increase number of archery practice areas.
6. Partner with MDC on controlled burns of natural areas.
7. Consider joint equipment storage at GCRA.
8. Manage buffer zone of GCRA as natural area.
9. Consider co-op agreement for MDC programs with planned parking and restrooms near GCRA tennis courts – Gans building does not have an exterior restroom or abundant visitor parking.
10. Consider “Natural Playground” concept when designing parks.

E. Rock Bridge State Park

1. Construct connecting trail from GCRA area to Rock Bridge State Park.
2. Assist Rock Bridge staff in communicating with public and GCRA patrons regarding mountain bike restrictions at Gans Creek Wilderness Area.

VII. Sustainable Living Groups

A. Columbia Center for Urban Agriculture (CCUA) and Community Garden Coalition

1. Consider acquiring 1.3 acre property at 1207 Smith St. for an urban farm, special use park allowing CCUA to lease the land.
2. Consider acquiring Ameren UE property, 310 E. Walnut St. for development of an urban park.
3. Create community CPRD garden pilot program/facility at Fairview Park. Provide staff or volunteers to manage and program. Provide water, tool storage, deer fence (natural buffer fence or man-made), greenhouse and restrooms.
4. Consider establishing a working-farm, special use park with leased multi-acre plots made available for substantial food production. Perche Creek area should be considered as a location. CCUA would consider a ten-year lease agreement with City to manage the land.
5. Provide space for community garden plots within park boundaries.
6. Consider edible landscaping in parks and open space areas. Work with TreeKeeper volunteers to maintain and care for edible landscaping in exchange for first choice of harvest as well as the option to donate produce to local food pantry.

B. Columbia Farmers Market

1. Need access to water for drinking fountain – would also service sport groups utilizing Clary-Shy Park – and hand-washing station for sanitary purposes (completed summer 2012).
2. Consider constructing a large shelter or pavilion allowing vendors to sell from back of vehicle during market hours.
3. Extend hard surface lot to provide for additional accessible parking areas closer to vendors. Extension would also provide for additional vendor space and entertainment.
4. Need increased access to electrical outlets.
5. Need on-site restrooms to serve growing market crowds – also to be used by sport groups and West Junior High physical education classes.
6. Construct shared storage facilities for market and possible sport groups.

C. Sustainable Farms and Communities, Inc.

1. Supports extension of lease for future permanent facility at the existing ARC location.
2. Continue to work with City on plans for new building.

VIII. Trails and Non-Motorized Transportation

A. City of Columbia Bicycle and Pedestrian Commission

1. Connect the new high school and surrounding neighborhoods with the existing trails system.
2. Continue to move forward and expand city-wide trail system.
3. Continue to allow Commission to comment on future trails plan and GetAbout Columbia (GAC) project list.

B. City of Columbia GetAbout Columbia Advisory Board

1. Continue dialogue regarding the GAC Advisory Board's priority ranking of the proposed Shepard to Rollins Connector (important for access to east campus area) and County House Trail Phase II East and West (important for connecting two neighborhoods to MKT).
2. Consider trailhead at Old 63 Park and clear tree line to provide scenic vista of campus.
3. Include access to MKT from Thornbrook and proposed Creeks Edge development (north of Thornbrook) neighborhoods on Trails Plan.
4. Improve bicycle access to County House Branch Trail off of Chapel Hill for both east and west bound traffic.
5. Improve bicycle access to the MKT from the north travel lane of Forum Blvd.
6. Improve travel path of bicyclists through Twin Lakes parking lot from County House Branch Trail to MKT connector.
7. Support development of Proctor Park pedestrian bridge for improved non-motorized transportation and recreation access to Bear Creek Trail.
8. Support development of Parkside Drive pedways for improved non-motorized transportation and recreation access to CCRA.

C. PedNet Coalition

1. Continue dialogue with GAC, CPRD and PedNet regarding the proposed GAC funded Shepard to Rollins Connector (important for access to east campus) and County House Trail Phase II East and West (important for connecting two neighborhoods off Rollins to MKT).
2. Consider alternative bicycle friendly route to CCRA from Bear Creek Trail – trail is too steep for average bicyclist.
3. Identify route for Bucks Run access off of Hominy Branch Trail.
4. Consider Clark Lane and Rice Rd connectors to Hinkson Creek Trail – study area needed.
5. Unified signage needed for entire trails/on-road non-motorized transportation system.
6. Consider additional layers when revising 2010 Trails Plan to provide more details on connector trails.
7. Consider “all-in-one” bike repair stations at select trailheads.
8. Continue to develop city-wide network of nature trails and urban pedways connecting residential subdivisions, employment centers, businesses, parks, schools, public buildings and downtown.

IX. Environmental Groups

A. Greenbelt Land Trust of Mid-Missouri (GBLT)

1. CPRD should prioritize preserving open space - especially water shed, riparian and storm water.
2. Collaborate with GBLT and other select agencies in community planning (area concepts and land acquisition criteria/matrix development) and land preservation efforts (controlled burns, cleanup days, etc.).
3. Collaborate with GBLT to develop a Regional Open Space Plan for minimal management of designated areas.
4. Consider GBLT for financial assistance to help acquire/manage open space.
5. Review BonFemme/Clear Creek Valley as an ecologically significant area for park acquisition.
6. Continue managing rough areas of golf courses as natural areas using “green” products when possible.
7. Actively seek to remove all non-native invasive species from parks and other public spaces.
8. Consider excess of 100 ft. buffer zone for open space designation.

B. Audubon Society

1. Continue to jointly plan and develop Bonnie View Nature Sanctuary and adjacent Columbia Audubon property.
2. Develop interpretive signs throughout Bonnie View.
3. Implement Audubon Society mission in future open space development plans by providing an environment supportive of bird habitat.

X. Central Columbia

A. Douglass Park Neighborhood Association

1. Redesign Douglass Park to discourage illicit activities, while providing for community and school activities.
2. Construct shelter at Douglass Park with design elements (including loading area, storage, stage area, base area for speakers) specific to cultural and community events.
3. Need a community center in downtown Columbia.

B. Douglass Park Forum and Douglass Park Planning Committee

1. Renovate existing cameras and install additional security cameras in the park.
2. Provide year-round restroom facilities at Douglass Park.
3. Renovate existing restroom facilities at Douglass Park.
4. Develop outdoor facilities at Douglass Park including: tennis courts, multiple small picnic shelters/tables, community garden plots, skate park, concession stand, event storage space, amphitheater, adult fitness station clusters and walking trail.
4. Replace and relocate medium shelter with large “events” shelter.
5. Plant edible landscaping and orchards.
6. Develop African-American Heritage Center and trailhead.
7. Replace existing playground surface with rubber tile safety surface.
8. Provide location for police substation at Douglass Park.
9. Relocate parking lot to 5th St.
10. Add parking to 5th St. and relocate existing parking lot.
11. Add parking to 5th St. and replace existing lot with porous paving product for overflow event parking.
12. Collaborate with Columbia Public Schools (CPS) to develop parking on west side of 5th St. north of Rogers.
13. Collaborate with CPS to develop track on existing CPS lot west of 5th St.
14. Protect memorial trees when developing park.
15. Develop YMCA, multi-purpose building/community center at Douglass Park.
16. Identify or construct a downtown facility to serve as a youth community center.

XI. Columbia Public Schools, Higher Education and Private Schools

A. Columbia Public Schools (CPS)

1. Continue working with CPS on acquiring park land adjacent to new schools.
2. Develop trail connections that link schools to neighborhoods. Priority schools include Alpha Hart Lewis Elementary, Battle High School and future elementary school adjacent to Battle.
3. Continue playground and outdoor fitness improvement program for elementary and middle schools.
4. Co-sponsor construction of tennis courts at Hickman High School.
5. City sponsorship of a portion of new elementary school gym construction so that the gyms may be enlarged and made available for CPRD programs.

B. Douglass High School

1. Redesign Douglass Park to discourage illicit activities while providing for community and school activities.
2. Need downtown community center.
3. Consider collaborative efforts to increase summer recreational programming and evening year-round programming at Douglass High School.
4. Construct skate park features (grinding rail, fun box or ramp) at Douglass Park.
5. Provide additional fencing around baseball diamond to prevent park patrons from interrupting class time.
6. Work with Douglass High School to utilize Douglass Pool for physical education water safety/aquatic programs.

C. Columbia Council PTA

1. Continue offering Annual City/School Park improvements funds.
2. Provide trail connections where appropriate.

D. Father Tolton High School

1. Provide trail connection from Philips Park to Tolton High School.
2. Consider joint development of tennis courts at Gans Creek Recreation Area.
3. Provide availability of athletic fields and tennis courts in exchange for P&R use of gym.

E. Columbia College

1. Continue to work with Columbia College on providing a game and practice field for their softball program.
2. Cooperate with joint development of future recreational facilities where appropriate.

F. University of Missouri – Mizzou Rec Clubs and Mizzou Athletics

1. Potential need for tennis courts due to growth in participants and lack of campus facilities.
2. Rugby Club needs more field space for tournaments.
3. Need cross country course for training and to host events.

G. Stephens College

1. Continue to work with Stephens College on providing a game and practice field for their softball program.
2. Cooperate with joint development of future recreational facilities where appropriate.

Parks and Recreation Needs Assessment Survey

Findings Report

Submitted to

*The City of Columbia, Missouri
Parks and Recreation Department*



by

Leisure Vision

a division of ETC Institute

725 W. Frontier Circle

Olathe, KS 66061

(913) 829-1215

June 2010

Section 1:
Executive Summary

Parks and Recreation Needs Assessment Survey

Executive Summary Report

Overview of the Methodology

The City of Columbia conducted a Parks and Recreation Needs Assessment Survey during March and April of 2010. The purpose of the survey was to establish priorities for the future improvement of parks and recreation facilities, programs and services within the community. The survey was designed to obtain statistically valid results from households throughout the City of Columbia. The survey was administered by a combination of mail and phone.

Leisure Vision worked extensively with City of Columbia officials in the development of the survey questionnaire. This work allowed the survey to be tailored to issues of strategic importance to effectively plan the future system.

Leisure Vision mailed surveys to a random sample of 3,000 households throughout the City of Columbia. Approximately three days after the surveys were mailed each household that received a survey also received an electronic voice message encouraging them to complete the survey. In addition, about two weeks after the surveys were mailed Leisure Vision began contacting households by phone. Those who indicated they had not returned the survey were given the option of completing it by phone.

The goal was to obtain a total of at least 600 completed surveys from City of Columbia households. This goal was far exceeded, with a total of 753 surveys having been completed. The results of the random sample of 753 households have a 95% level of confidence with a precision of at least +/-3.5%.

The following pages summarize major survey findings.

Major Survey Findings

- **Visiting Park City Parks.** Eighty-seven percent (87%) of households have visited City of Columbia parks during the past year. This is significantly higher than the national benchmarking average of 72%.

Of the 87% of households that have visited City parks during the past year, 95% rated the physical condition of the parks they've visited as either excellent (41%) or good (54%). This is higher than the national benchmarking average of 85% of households who rated the physical condition of parks as either excellent or good. In addition, 5% of households rated the physical condition of parks as fair and less than 1% rated them as poor.

- **City Parks and Recreation Facilities Visited.** The City of Columbia parks and recreation facilities that the highest percentage of households have used/visited during the past 12 months are: walking, hiking, and biking trails (70%), picnic shelters (50%), playgrounds (47%), nature trails (41%), and activity and recreation center (38%).

- **Reasons Preventing Households from Using City Parks and Recreation Facilities.** The most frequently mentioned reasons preventing households from using City of Columbia parks and recreation facilities are: “we are too busy or not interested” (26%), “household uses facilities from other organizations” (13%), and “location of City facilities not close to my home” (12%).

- **Participation in City Recreation Programs.** The City recreation programs that the highest percentage of households have participated in over the past 12 months are: special events (28%), youth and adult sports (26%), aquatics (22%), fitness/exercise classes (14%).

- **Need for Parks and Recreation Facilities.** The parks and recreation facilities that the highest percentage of households have a need for are: walking and biking trails (76%), park shelters and picnic areas (70%), small neighborhood parks (68%), large community parks (66%), nature trails (55%), and playground equipment and play areas (51%).

- **Most Important Parks and Recreation Facilities.** Based on the sum of their top four choices, the parks and recreation facilities that households rated as the most important are: walking and biking trails (37%), small neighborhood parks (33%), large community parks (22%), playground equipment and play areas (20%), nature trails (17%), and park shelters and picnic areas (16%).

Parks and Recreation Needs Assessment Survey for the City of Columbia

- **Need for Recreation Programs.** The recreation programs that the highest percentage of households have a need for are: special events/festivals (46%), adult fitness and wellness programs (42%), nature education programs/outdoor adventure (33%), and youth learn to swim programs (28%).
- **Most Important Recreation Programs.** Based on the sum of their top four choices, the recreation programs that households rated as the most important are: special events/festivals (29%), adult fitness and wellness programs (26%), youth learn to swim programs (16%), youth/teen sports programs (15%), and nature education programs/outdoor adventure (15%).
- **Recreation Programs Participated in Most Often at City Facilities.** Based on the sum of their top four choices, the recreation programs that households participate in most often at City of Columbia parks and recreation facilities are: special events/festivals (25%), youth/teen sports programs (12%), and adult fitness and wellness programs (11%).
- **Ways Respondents Learn about Programs and Activities.** The most frequently mentioned ways that respondents learn about Columbia Parks and Recreation Department programs and activities are: “Leisure Times” Activity Guide (63%), newspaper articles/advertisements (47%), from friends and neighbors (47%), and parks and recreation website (35%).
- **Actions Most Willing to Fund.** Based on the sum of their top four choices, the actions that the highest percentage of respondents are willing to fund with their parks and recreation tax dollars are: fix-up/repair older park facilities/shelters/playgrounds (47%), upgrade/improve existing pools/sports fields/golf courses (29%), acquire land for preservation & develop walking/hiking trails (28%), and acquire land to preserve open space & protect the environment (26%).
- **Level of Satisfaction with the Overall Value Received from the Parks and Recreation Department.** Seventy-five percent (75%) of households are either very satisfied (41%) or somewhat satisfied (34%) with the overall value their household receives from the City of Columbia Parks and Recreation Department. Only 5% of households are either somewhat dissatisfied (3%) or very dissatisfied (2%). In addition, 14% of respondents rated the Parks and Recreation Department as “neutral”, and 6% indicated “don’t know”.

- **Level of Support for Renewing the 1/8-Cent Park Sales Tax for 5 Years.** Eighty-three percent (83%) of respondents are either very supportive (63%) or somewhat supportive (20%) of renewing the 1/8-cent parks sales tax for 5 years. Only 7% of respondents are not supportive of renewing the 1/8-cent park sales tax for 5 years, and 10% indicated “not sure”.
- **Level of Support for Renewing the 1/8-Cent Park Sales Tax for 10 Years.** Seventy-nine percent (79%) of respondents are either very supportive (57%) or somewhat supportive (22%) of renewing the 1/8-cent parks sales tax for 10 years. Only 9% of respondents are not supportive of renewing the 1/8-cent park sales tax for 10 years, and 12% indicated “not sure”.
- **Level of Priority of Maintaining Existing Parks and Recreation Facilities.** Seventy-seven percent (77%) of respondents feel City officials should place either a very high (43%) or high (34%) priority on maintaining existing parks and recreation facilities. Only 4% of respondents feel that maintaining existing City parks and recreation facilities should be a low or very low priority, and 19% feel it should be a medium priority.
- **Allocation of \$100 for the Parks Sales Tax.** Respondents would allocate \$45 out of \$100 for maintaining the condition of existing parks, trails, and facilities. The remaining \$55 was allocated as follows: acquiring, protecting and preserving parks, green space and stream corridors (\$21), new park/facility development (\$17), and trails – new construction, improvements, acquisition and connections (\$17).
- **Change in Use of Public Parks and Recreation Facilities During the Past Year.** During the past 12 months, 54% of households have used public parks and recreation facilities the same amount. In addition, 25% of households have made greater use of public parks and recreation facilities, and 12% have made less use of public parks and recreation facilities.

Parks and Recreation Needs Assessment: 2011 Park/Recreation User Survey

Findings Summary



Prepared by:

Sonja A. Wilhelm Stanis, Ph.D.; Hua Bai, M.S.; and Laura Thal, B.S.
Department of Parks, Recreation and Tourism, University of Missouri

December 2012



Department of Parks, Recreation & Tourism
School of Natural Resources
University of Missouri

Executive Summary

2011 Park/Recreation User Survey

Parks and Recreation Needs Assessment Survey 2011 Park/Recreation User Survey

Methodology Overview

An invitation to complete a web-based survey was sent via email to 6,079 Parks & Recreation web mail subscribers (50+ Programs, Adult Softball, ARC Announcements, Basketball, Football, Golf, Indoor Sports, Leisure Times Activity Guide, Soccer, Baseball/Softball, and Youth Lacrosse). Due to sampling procedures, individuals who use parks or facilities yet are not web mail subscribers were not included in the sample. To increase response rates, online respondents were offered an opportunity to enter in a drawing for prizes and hard copies were also offered to anyone unable to enter online. A total of 786 completed surveys were received between November 9 and December 2, 2011, for a final response rate of thirteen percent (13%; note: some individuals may subscribe to more than one webmail list and thus may be counted more than once in the sample list, lowering the reported response rate). The survey instrument included questions similar to the 2010 Parks and Recreation Citizen Survey, with the elimination of questions related to the 2010 Parks Sales Tax ballot issue and the addition of questions specific to park users. For questions in which respondents were asked to indicate rankings, data were cleaned to remove multiple identical responses per respondent on a single question.

Major Survey Findings

1. Visiting City Parks. Ninety-nine percent (99%) of respondents had visited City of Columbia parks during the past year. Of those, the *park visited most often* by respondents was Cosmo Park (47%), followed by Stephens Lake Park (17%), Cosmo-Bethel Park (6%), Twin Lakes Recreation Area (6%), and Albert-Oakland Park (4%). When considering the *top three most often visited parks*, seventy-one percent (71%) of respondents reported Cosmo Park in their top three, followed by Stephens Lake Park (50%), Cosmo-Bethel Park (22%), Twin Lakes Recreation Area (17%), Albert-Oakland Park (15%), Flat Branch Park (13%), and Grindstone Nature Area (10%).

2. Visiting City Trails. Seventy-nine percent (79%) of respondents had visited City of Columbia's trails during the past year. Of those, the *trail visited most often* by respondents was the MKT Trail (53%), followed by Stephens Lake Park- Lake or Perimeter Trail (11%), and Bear Creek Trail (11%). When considering the *top three most often visited trails*, seventy-four percent (74%) of respondents reported the MKT Trail in their top three, followed by Stephens Lake Trails (41%), Bear Creek Trail (23%), Twin Lakes Recreation Area Trail (21%), Grindstone Nature Area/Capen Park - Nature Trails (19%), Forum Nature Area – Nature Trails (13%), Cosmo Park – Fitness Trail (12%), and Hinkson Creek Trail (12%).

3. Condition of Parks/Trails. Ninety percent (90%) of the respondents rated the physical condition of the parks/trails they've visited as either excellent (35%) or good (55%) condition. Only seven percent (7%) of respondents rated the physical condition of parks/trails as fair, and less than one percent (<1%) rated them as poor. In addition, two percent (2%) indicated they didn't know.

4. City Parks and Recreation Facilities Used or Visited. The City of Columbia parks and recreation facilities that the highest percentage of respondents have used/visited during the past 12 months are: walking, hiking, and biking trails (81%), nature trails (57%), picnic shelters (56%), playgrounds (55%), and the Activity & Recreation Center (40%). When considering the *one facility used most often*, twenty-nine percent (29%) of respondents indicated walking, hiking and biking trails, followed by softball/baseball fields (14%), skateboard/roller hockey park (13%), and playgrounds (9%). When considering the *top four most often used/visited facilities*, sixty-nine percent (69%) of respondents indicated walking, hiking, and biking trails, followed by playgrounds (33%), nature trails (29%), softball/baseball fields (25%), the Activity & Recreation Center (24%), and picnic shelters (21%).

5. Reasons Preventing Respondents from Using City Parks and Recreation Facilities. The most frequently mentioned reasons preventing respondents from using City of Columbia parks and recreation facilities are: “we are too busy” (26%), “location of City facilities is not close to my home” (24%), “personal security/safety” (13%), “fees are too expensive” (12%), and “parks do not contain the facilities we need” (12%). In addition, thirty percent (30%) of respondents indicated that nothing prevented them from using City of Columbia parks and recreation facilities.

6. Perceived Green Space Within Walking Distance. Sixty-two percent (62%) of respondents feel that there are sufficient parks and green space within walking distance of their residence, while twenty-nine percent (29%) responded there is not sufficient green space within walking distance of their residence. In addition, eight percent (8%) responded they were not sure.

7. Participation in City Parks and Recreation Programs. The parks and recreation programs with highest percentage of respondents reporting participation over the past 12 months are: youth and adult sports (47%), special events (34%), and aquatics (31%). Twenty-two percent (22%) of respondents indicated they do not use recreation programs. When considering the *one most often used program*, respondents indicated youth and adult sports (37%), followed by special events (11%) and aquatics (9%). Similarly, when considering their *top four most utilized programs*, forty-seven percent (47%) of respondents indicated youth and adult sports, followed by special events (34%), aquatics (30%), fitness/exercise classes (18%), outdoor/nature education (11%), and golf programs (11%).

8. Need for More Parks and Recreation Facilities. The parks and recreation facilities that the highest percentage of respondents have an additional need for more of are: small neighborhood parks (39%), ice skating facilities (30%), large community parks (26%), boating and fishing areas (25%), walking and biking trails (23%), off-leash dog parks (21%), and soccer fields (20%). In addition, fourteen percent (14%) of the respondents indicated they do not need any additional parks and recreation facilities.

9. Most Important Parks and Recreation Facilities. When asked to select which parks and recreation facilities are the *most important* to the respondents’ household regardless of how often used, thirteen percent (13%) indicated skateboard parks/bike parks as their top one choice, followed by walking and biking trails (10%), and ice-skating facilities (8%). When considering

the *top four facilities most important* to respondents' household regardless of how often used, twenty-four percent (24%) of respondents indicated walking and biking trails in their top four choices, followed by ice skating facilities (22%), small neighborhood parks (20%), skateboard parks/bike parks (18%), off-leash dog parks (16%), and nature trails (14%). In addition, eight percent (8%) of the respondents reported that none of the facilities were most important to their household.

10. Need for Additional Recreation Programs. The recreation programs that the highest percentages of respondents have an additional need for more of are: special events/festivals (17%), adult fitness and wellness programs (17%), nature education programs/outdoor adventure (16%), education/life skills programs (12%) and youth/teen sports programs (12%). In addition, forty-two percent (42%) of respondents indicated they do not have a need for additional recreation programs.

11. Most Important Recreation Program. Regarding programs that are the *most important* to the respondents' household regardless of how often they participate, seven percent (7%) indicated youth/teen sports programs as their top one choice, followed by adult fitness and wellness programs (6%), youth learn to swim programs (6%), special events/festivals (6%), and adult sport programs (6%). When considering the *top three programs most important* to respondents' household regardless of how often participate, twenty-two percent (22%) of respondents listed special events/festivals, followed by nature education programs/outdoor adventure (17%), and adult fitness and wellness programs (16%). In addition, thirty-three percent (33%) of the respondents reported that none of the recreation programs were most important to their household.

12. Recreation Programs Participated in Most Often. When asked to select which *one recreation program* respondents currently participate in most often, thirteen percent (13%) indicated youth/teen sports programs, followed by special events/festivals (11%), and adult sports programs (9%). When considering the *top four recreation programs* respondents currently participate in most often, twenty-six (26%) of respondents indicated special events/festivals in their top four, followed by youth/team sports programs (16%), adult sports programs (12%), and adult fitness and wellness programs (12%). In addition, forty-one percent (41%) of respondents reported none.

13. Ways Respondents Learn about Programs and Activities. The most frequently indicated ways respondents report learning about Columbia Parks and Recreation Department programs and activities are: parks and recreation website (63%), "Leisure Times" activity guide (61%), friends and neighbors (49%), email bulletins or E-newsletters (30%), newspaper articles/advertisements (28%), radio (24%), repeat customer (23%), and school flyer/newsletter (20%). In addition, fourteen percent (14%) of respondents indicated they learn about Columbia Parks and Recreation Department programs through Facebook.

14. Radio Station Popularity. The most listened-to Columbia area radio stations by respondents are KBIA 91.3 FM (15%), followed by KCLR 99.3 FM (11%), KOQL 106.1 (9%), and KBXR 102.3 (9%).

15. Actions Most Willing to Fund. The actions that the highest percentage of respondents are “very supportive” of funding with their parks and recreation tax dollars are: fix-up/repair older park facilities/shelters/playgrounds (73%), upgrade/improve existing pools/sports fields/golf courses (56%), acquire land for preservation & develop walking/hiking trails (52%), and acquire land to preserve open space & protect the environment (48%).

When including respondents that are somewhat supportive, a similar pattern emerges. The actions with the highest percentage of support (i.e., “very supportive” and “somewhat supportive”) of funding with their parks and recreation tax dollars are: fix-up/repair older park facilities/shelters/playgrounds (97%), upgrade/improve existing pools/sports fields/golf courses (89%), acquire land for preservation & develop walking/hiking trails (88%), and acquire land to preserve open space & protect the environment (87%), acquire land for developing neighborhood parks (86%), acquire land for developing athletic fields and recreational facilities (84%), and develop new nature/education trails (79%).

There were only two actions with the majority of respondents are “not supportive” of funding with their parks and recreation tax dollars are: acquire and develop a new golf course (65%), and develop equestrian trails (52%).

16. Satisfaction with the Overall Value Received from the Parks and Recreation Department. Eighty-eight percent (88%) of respondents are either very satisfied (51%) or somewhat satisfied (37%) with the overall value their household receives from the City of Columbia Parks and Recreation Department. Only four percent (4%) of respondents are either somewhat dissatisfied (3%) or very dissatisfied (1%). In addition, eight percent (8%) of respondents indicated they were neutral regarding the overall value to their household.

17. Priority of Maintaining Existing Parks, Trails, and Recreation Facilities. Eighty-eight percent (88%) of respondents feel that city officials should place either a very high (46%) or high (42%) priority on maintaining existing parks, trails, and recreation facilities. Twelve percent (12%) feel that it should be a medium priority, and less than one percent (0.4%) of respondents feel that maintaining existing parks, trails and recreation facilities should be a low priority.

18. Support for Funding Technological Improvements within the Parks and Recreation System. Four technology improvements received support from the majority of respondents: develop online reservation system for picnic shelters (90%: 50% very supportive, 40% somewhat supportive), develop mobile applications for smart phones (77%: 42% very supportive, 35% somewhat supportive), provide wireless internet access in the parks (62%: 27% very supportive, 35% somewhat supportive), and develop online videos (57%: 14% very supportive, 43% somewhat supportive). The technology improvement that received the greatest proportion of respondents indicating they are not supportive of it is provide webcams at various park facilities (42%), followed by provide wireless internet access in parks (34%), and develop online golf tee time reservations (31%).

19. Change in Use of Public Parks and Recreation Facilities during the Past Year. During the past 12 months, sixty-two percent (62%) of respondents have used public parks and recreation facilities the same amount as in the past. In addition, thirty-one percent (31%) of

respondents have made *greater* use of public parks and recreation facilities, while only six percent (6%) have made *less* use of public parks and recreation facilities.

20. Demographics. Sixty-three percent (63%) of respondents were Female, while thirty-five percent (35%) were Male and two percent (2%) did not answer. Regarding race/ethnicity, the majority of respondents reported to be White (92%), followed by Black (2%), Hispanic or Latino (2%), and Other (2%).

Thirty-nine percent (39%) of households had at least one youth under the age of 19 years. Of those, nine percent (9%) had at least one child under 5 years, eleven percent (11%) with at least one child 5-9 years, eleven percent (11%) with at least one child 10-14 years, and eight percent (8%) with at least one child 15-19 years. In addition, twenty-one percent (21%) of households had at least one adult between 20-34 years, thirty-eight percent (38%) with at least one adult between 35-64 years, and only two percent (2%) of reporting households had at least one adult 65 years or older.

Seventy-five percent (75%) of respondents live within Columbia city limits, while twenty-three percent (23%) do not. Additionally, two percent (2%) indicated they do not know, or did not answer. Regarding zip code, forty-five percent (45%) of respondents have a home zip code of 65203, followed by 65202 (27%), 65201 (18%), and other (10%).



Heritage Festival at Nifong Park

Public Input

Conclusion

The eleven-month public input process allowed the Department to have free-flowing communication between park planners and park constituents and gain a comprehensive understanding of the community's recreation facility needs. Unless otherwise noted, the statistics used in the conclusion comments are from the citywide survey conducted by Leisure Vision/ETC Institute. Below is a summarization of the top parks and facility needs as identified through this process:

1. **Walking and Biking Trails:** There is strong support for walking and biking trails in terms of citizen use, satisfaction with existing trails, and financial support for acquisition and development. Walking and biking trails ranked as the number one facility need (76%). Walking and biking trails also ranked first as the most important recreation facility (37%), and 70% of respondents indicated a recent visit. Nature trails also scored in the top five as an important facility (17%), as well as facilities most visited (41%). The Department should continue to pursue acquisition and development of trails in order to provide community-wide support for citizens desiring to utilize trails for recreation, exercise, and non-motorized transportation.
2. **Neighborhood Parks and Community Parks:** Neighborhood parks, community parks, playground equipment/play areas, and park shelters/picnic areas were the second, third, fourth, and sixth (respectively) most important facilities to survey respondents. The majority of survey respondents expressed a need for parks shelters/picnic areas (70%), neighborhood parks (68%), community parks (66%), and playground equipment/play areas (51%). Although many Columbia residents have access to the parks in their area, 29% of the respondents in both the citywide and park user surveys did not feel there were sufficient parks and green space within walking distance of their residence. Seventy-five percent (75%) expressed support for acquiring land for developing neighborhood parks. As a result of these findings, the Department should continue to pursue acquisition and development of parks and their supporting amenities.
3. **City-Wide Special Events and Festivals:** The number one recreation program most important to households (29%) and that households participate in most often (25%) was special events/festivals. Survey respondents ranked special events/festivals as the top recreation program need (46%). The main venues for outdoor special events and festivals are community and special purpose parks. Based on the survey results and considering the economic benefits festivals bring to the community, the Department should make every effort to continue to develop, maintain and enhance facilities to accommodate special events that are managed by the Department and other organizations.
4. **Use and Maintenance of Parks:** The survey revealed that the vast majority (87%) of Columbia citizens use the parks, significantly more than the national benchmarking average of 72%. The majority of respondents (77%) felt City officials should place a high or very high priority on maintaining the existing parks, trails and recreation

facilities. Ninety-two percent (92%) expressed support for fixing up and repairing existing park facilities, which also ranked number one (47%) of the actions respondents would be most willing to fund with Parks and Recreation tax dollars.

Ninety-five percent (95%) rated the physical condition of the parks they've visited as either excellent (41%) or good (54%). This is higher than the national benchmarking average of 85% of households who rated the physical condition of parks as either excellent or good. It is evident by the high priority respondents placed on maintaining the parks that Columbia residents desire to maintain their high satisfaction level. Thus, renovation and major repair of existing park facilities should continue to be a high priority for the Department and scheduled in the Capital Improvement Program.

5. **Improvements to Existing Parks/Facilities:** Discussions with focus groups and park users led to many requests for improvements to existing facilities (such as the addition of lights, bleachers, parking spaces, playgrounds, restrooms, water fountains, etc.) to accommodate their needs and make their recreation experience more enjoyable. Eighty-three percent (83%) of survey respondents expressed support for upgrading/improving pools/sports fields/golf courses. Upgrading/improving facilities also ranked second (29%) as the action respondents were most willing to fund with their Parks and Recreation tax dollars. The Department should continue to make improvements to existing facilities to maximize their use and taxpayer investment.

6. **Athletic Facilities:** Survey respondents (15%) indicated that youth and teen sports programs were the second most important in terms of participation and third in overall importance (12%). Organized athletic clubs and organizations expressed a variety of needs for additional fields, court and related support facilities such as parking, concession stands, batting cages, storage rooms and lights. Some of the facilities were requested to facilitate hosting local, regional, and state tournaments that would not only serve the players, but would have a positive economic impact on the community. Listed below is a summary of the estimated facility needs based on current and anticipated participation numbers:
 - a. Baseball/Softball 4 – 6 fields (225 ft. – 360 ft.)
 - b. Soccer 10 – 12 fields (all regulation)
 - c. Football/Lacrosse 3 – 4 fields
 - d. Basketball 4 – 6 indoor courts

7. **Ice Skating Facility:** Strong support for an ice arena was indicated via the public input process as well as comments from organized citizen groups. Local ice skating enthusiasts regularly travel to Jefferson City and as far as St. Louis for both practice and competition. Thirty-one percent (31%) of survey respondents expressed a need for an ice skating facility, which represents an estimated 12,659 households. Development goals include an outdoor single-sheet facility to meet short-term needs with long-term goals including an indoor, year-round facility. A year-round facility would initially include a single-sheet facility (option to expand to two), locker rooms and viewing area with the focus on all aspects of ice sports and ice skating (e.g. figure skating, learn to skate programs and broomball leagues).

8. **Aquatic Facility:** Participation in aquatic programs ranked third overall (22%), with youth learn to swim classes also ranking third as the most important recreation program (16%). As cost recovery goals become a critical issue, there is a need for a premier, family-friendly aquatic center with multiple interactive play structures (e.g. water slides, vortex, lazy river, diving board, etc.). Development goals should include a facility designed to meet the needs of residents, as well as an attraction to visitors from surrounding areas.
9. **Recreation Centers and Fitness/Wellness Programs:** Adult fitness and wellness programs ranked second in recreational program needs (42%) and received the same ranking for most important recreation program (26%). Thirty-eight percent (38%) of the survey respondents had visited the ARC in the past year. It is noteworthy that “location of City facilities not close to my home” ranked as the third reason (12%) that prevented households from using Parks and Recreation facilities. The Department should continue to monitor the community-wide availability of low-cost and satellite fitness centers, as well as pursue the national trend of providing outdoor fitness equipment.
10. **Extreme Sports Facilities:** Non-traditional activities such as skateboarding, BMX and mountain biking continue to be more mainstream for Columbia youth. Numerous comments during the public input process alluded to the need for multiple, community-wide facilities (with varying skill levels) to meet this growing demand. Overcrowding and repeated misuse by BMX trick-bicycles at the existing skate park indicates a pressing need for additional facilities.
11. **Nature/Interpretive Center:** The 2002 Facility Needs Update noted that at that time, the Department of Natural Resources was working with local organizations to develop a facility at Rock Bridge State Park. Unfortunately, those efforts have stalled and are not being pursued at this time. The Department recommends that a facility similar to the Runge Nature Area in Jefferson City is appropriate in size and scope for the Columbia area.



Tony Hawk Visits Columbia Skate Park
October 17, 2009